

District School Journal,

FOR THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

PROMOTE, AS AN OBJECT OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE, INSTITUTIONS FOR THE GENERAL DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE.—Washington.

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STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND DECISIONS RELATING TO
COMMON SCHOOLS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS A SCHOOL BOOK.

New-York, March 8, 1842.

SIR—Your order to introduce the New Testament in the public schools of the state of New-York, will be the means of driving from the same, all the children of Jewish parents. I am Sir, yours respectfully,

N. PHILLIPS, 46 Henry st.

SAMUEL YOUNG, Esq.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
DEPARTMENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS,
Albany, March 11, 1842.

SIR—In answer to yours of the 8th inst. I beg leave to state that I have made no order such as you suppose. What you deem an order, is no more than an earnest recommendation, submitted to the judgment, the discretion and the conscience of those who have the selection of books for District Schools.

I claim the right of frankly expressing my opinions, and I concede the same right to all others, both Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers: nor would I adopt any order, or exercise any power, other than the power of persuasion, to change the conscientious belief of any human being, on any subject whatever. I may think that the unalloyed doctrines of pure morality; a love and reverence for the Creator; an attachment to truth, justice and purity; an abnegation of selfishness; a forgiveness of injuries; an abstinence from revenge and cruelty; and a susceptibility to the claims of charity and the impulses of benevolence—are more effectually inculcated, and more indelibly impressed upon the minds of the young by the New Testament, than any other book whatever. I may believe that its requirements are more eminently calculated to promote "peace on earth and good will to men;" I may believe that the Christian religion has done more to establish the great truth of social equality than "God, of one flesh has made all the children of men," and that it has been more efficacious in eradicating slavery and oppression, in elevating the social condition of woman—in short, in softening and civilizing mankind—than any other creed whatever. I may, and do, after years of reading, reflection and observation, believe all this. But I am aware that others, with doubtless, equally good intentions, may entertain different notions of morality, and adopt other systems of human happiness; and consequently give a preference to other creeds and to other books. Over their consciences I shall never attempt to exercise any control. Their whole responsibility is to a much higher tribunal. Your ob't serv't,

S. YOUNG, Sup't Common Schools.

N. PHILLIPS, 46 Henry st. New-York.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT
OF COMMON SCHOOLS,
Albany, March 16, 1842.

SIR—I have received your letter of the 12th inst. in which you request the opinion of this Department, as to the proper course to be pursued by Commissioners in the distribution of the Library money for the present year, in reference to those districts which have expended the whole of the money received in 1841, in the purchase of religious works. The specific cases mentioned, are those of District No. 4 in your town, in which 45 volumes of the "Christian Library," No. 6, in which 13 volumes of the "Evangelical Family Library," No. 9, in which 15 volumes of the "Christian Library" and No. 25, in which 23 volumes of the "Evangelical Family Library" have been purchased by the Trustees—and for which the whole of the Library fund apportioned to those districts respectively at the last distribution of public money, has been appropriated. You observe that the Deputy Superintendent of your county, and several of the inhabitants of the above named districts, have complained to you, as one of the Commissioners of Brookhaven, that these purchases were improper exercises of the discretion vested in the Trustees, and requested that such Trustees should be directed to exchange them for more suitable works, on pain

of forfeiture of the Library money for the present year. You also state that you have examined the 45 volumes of the "Christian Library," and that although you did not discover that they were exactly sectarian, you informed the Trustees that you disapproved of the expenditure of the whole of the Library money belonging to the district, in the purchase of religious works; that there were many who would not peruse them, but who would read other useful books if they could procure them—and that as the money was contributed by the whole community, the interests of all should be consulted, or these Libraries would become sources of contention and eventually prove a failure: that you accordingly advised the exchange of these works, or at least two-thirds of them, for more useful books for general circulation: but that the Trustees were unwilling to do so, on the allegation that a large majority of the reading portion of the district, preferred such works to any other.

The interference of the Commissioners, or of this Department, in the selection of books for the several district libraries, by those to whom the law has confided this task, is a subject of great delicacy; and is justifiable only in cases where there has been a clear and palpable misappropriation of the public funds. The Libraries were designed for the benefit and instruction of the inhabitants of the respective districts and their children: for the dissemination of sound and useful knowledge, and for the promotion of the intellectual and moral welfare of the community. A large and liberal discretion was vested in the officers and inhabitants of the districts, in the application of the munificent means appropriated by the state, for the accomplishment of these great objects. The purchase of "works imbued with party politics, and those of a sectarian character, or of hostility to the Christian religion," was expressly prohibited: as was also the purchase of mere text books, and light and frivolous tales and romances: and by several of the decisions of this Department, works exclusively intended for professional reading—such as medical treatises, law books, and theological works, have been discontinued, as a part of the District Library. On a recent application from a district in Southold, in your county, I felt myself bound to regard the "Christian Library," a catalogue of which was forwarded for my opinion, as coming within the latter denomination, notwithstanding the absence of anything sectarian in its composition. On the representation of the Trustees, however, that the District was already liberally provided with miscellaneous and scientific works, including the first, and portions of the second and third series of the Harper's Library, and that the inhabitants were unanimously desirous of appropriating their money, for this year only, to the purchase of the works in question, they were authorized to do so. The cases presented by you seem to rest upon a different ground.—The works purchased, though free from sectarianism, are strictly theological in their character, and better adapted to the library of the clergyman, the Sunday School Library, or the private library, than to that of the district. Several of the inhabitants, the County Superintendent and the Commissioners, deem them exceptionable and improper: and the exclusive appropriation of the Library Fund to their purchase, under such circumstances, cannot operate otherwise than detrimentally to the best interests of the district, and the usefulness of its library. While I do not feel myself at liberty to withhold the share of library money due the district for the present year, I respectfully and earnestly recommend to the Trustees, to exchange the greater portion, if not the whole of the works alluded to, for those of a less objectionable and obnoxious character: better adapted to the spread of practical and scientific knowledge: and more in accordance with the spirit and object of the institution of District libraries.

In these observations, I wish it to be distinctly understood, that so far as I have had an opportunity to become acquainted with the character and execution of the works contained in the "Christian Library" and the "Evangelical Family Library," I find nothing to condemn. On the contrary, many of the works are from the pens of some of the most able and eminent Christians and Divines: and all of them, doubtless, are well worthy of perusal. But as their titles clearly indicate, they are designed for private, theological, and family libraries: they have no necessary or immediate connection with the advancement of scientific and scholastic knowledge: and however much they may be adapted to the tastes of the mature and well disciplined mind, they fail to reach the wants of those who are beginning to develop their mental faculties, and for whom a taste for knowledge and the communication of practical information, is indispensable to the judicious culture of their expanding powers. Yours, &c.

S. YOUNG, Sup't of Common Schools.

S. B. STRONG, Esq. Com. C. Schools, Brookhaven.

Cortland Village, March 7, 1842.

SIR—In several Common School Libraries already visited by me, I have found a work entitled the "Pirates Own Book," and in one of the same libraries, "The lives and exploits of the Banditti and Robbers of all nations," 2 vols. Phila. pub. by R. W. Pomeroy, 1839.

I have uniformly advised their removal, and assigned the following reasons: that in the first place, aside from any directly pernicious tendency which they are supposed to exercise, the information which they comprise is not of a valuable character: that the wild and exciting tales which they contain, unfit the youthful mind for the perusal of works of a graver and more useful character: that they cater to a depraved and vitiated taste by dilating on all the revolting details of the worst crimes of which humanity is capable: and lastly, that they do exercise a positively bad and dangerous tendency over the youthful mind. The first step, to vice is the knowledge of it. And where vice and crime are painted in those illusive colorings which nearly ally them to virtues, they lose their naked repulsiveness.—When the brute courage of the lawless buccaneer is held up and expatiated on as lofty heroism; when the capricious mercy, which even the gorged wild beast will occasionally, and perhaps equally often manifest, is dignified with the name of magnanimity and generosity, it is to be feared that the lives of such men afford not the benefit of a negative example—at least, to the youthful minds which the C. S. Libraries are intended principally to benefit. It is to be feared, that to the mind in which sound principles have not taken deep root, and had time to attain some degree of vigor and maturity, these tales of wild excitement and daring adventure, where new scenes and new objects forever meet the eye; where the most unrestrained passions meet with no check, and untold wealth may be had for the asking, are more prone to dazzle and captivate, than to excite disgust and abhorrence. I have ever thought there was a dangerous kind of fascination in stories of this kind. All have heard of the incident of the young man who on witnessing a thrilling representation on the stage of the "Ruined Gambler," exclaimed in an uncontrollable burst of feeling, "I too will be a ruined gambler!"

But it has been several times said to me, all this is obviated by the fact, that in the end, this pirate or robber is taken and executed. The smallest boy, however, knows that their seizure or escape depends upon contingencies. Some never have been taken; others, we know, have died peaceably in their beds; many have fallen in battle, the common and the honorable lot of the soldier; and when seized and put to death even by those vindictive methods, until so recently practised—by the cross, by impalement, etc.—if the youthful mind has not already been prepared to regard it as the martyrdom of a hero, we at least have the warrant of experience, in saying that the public exhibitions of scenes of this kind, either on paper or in actual life, have never been found to exercise that salutary influence, which perhaps it would be so natural to expect.

Such, Sir, is an outline of the reasons which I have urged, when I have found such books in the C. S. Libraries, to procure their removal; and in corroboration of some of the positions assumed by me, I would remark, that where I have found such books, Librarians and other school officers present, have uniformly admitted, that they are more read by boys, than any other books in the library. A sensible farmer complained to me last week, that he "wished the pirate book was out of the library, for his son would read nothing else—his whole thoughts were on it day and night."

Where I have been able to have the trustees present, when examining a library, and assigned the above reasons for removing a book, I have usually found them willing to accept my advice. But there have been cases, when trustees were not present, and I could only communicate with them by letter, and then, perhaps, not at sufficient length to render my reasoning fully satisfactory. The immediate occasion of my addressing you on this subject, at this time, is, that I found the "Pirates Own Book," and "The lives and exploits of the Banditti and Robbers of all nations," in a school in the town of Marathon, last week, and on advising their removal, and assigning my reasons, the trustees differed with me in opinion, and it was agreed the matter should be placed before you, for your decision. Your decision therefore is respectfully solicited.

Your ob't serv't,
HENRY S. RANDALL,
Deputy Sup't Common Schools, Cortland co.

HON. SAMUEL YOUNG.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
DEPARTMENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS,
Albany, March 11, 1842.

DEAR SIR—I fully concur with you in your views respecting the propriety of introducing or retaining in the

School District Libraries, the works indicated by you. In my judgment, their influence upon the youthful mind is most pernicious: and no parent who duly appreciates the future happiness, welfare and respectability of his child, should permit him to peruse such works, except under such restrictions, and with the aid of such counteracting influences, as will effectually serve as an antidote to the poison, which must necessarily be imbibed, and I recommend the unqualified exclusion from every School District Library of the state, of the "Pirate's Own Book," and the "Lives and exploits of the Banditti and robbers of all nations." They serve only to minister to that morbid appetite for the revolting and disgusting details of vice and crime, especially when exhibited on an extensive scale, which characterizes the undisciplined and vulgar mind. They stimulate and excite the worst propensities and passions of our nature, without contributing in the slightest degree to the improvement or elevation of the intellect or the heart. It is deeply and seriously to be regretted, that any considerable portion of an enlightened community should countenance the diffusion of works so exceptionable in their tendency. While, however, I claim no right and feel no disposition to interfere with their unlimited circulation wherever the consciences and taste of the reading public will permit, I am bound by the position to which I have been called, and by the obligations I have assumed, to see that no contaminating influences are permitted to mingle with the pure streams of knowledge and instruction designed to be secured by the introduction of District Libraries into the several school districts of the State. The public funds set apart for the enlightened munificence of the legislature, for the general diffusion of intellectual and moral science, shall never, with my consent or knowledge, be perverted to unworthy, degrading and ignoble purposes: and whenever I am satisfied that the District Libraries have been permitted by those to whom the selection of books has been confided, to become the vehicles of corrupting and contaminating appeals to the passions, the imagination or the fancy, I shall promptly apply the remedy which the law has placed in my hands.

The trustees of the Marathon district, are therefore, hereby directed to exclude the works in question from their Library, and to supply their place with others of an unexceptionable character; and the Commissioners of Common Schools for the several towns of the State, are hereby recommended to withhold the Library money hereafter to be received, from every district, having in its District Library, the works referred to, and to report the case to this Department.

S. YOUNG,

Superintendent of Common Schools.

Col. HENRY S. RANDALL, Dep't Supt of Cortland co.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS.—Concluded.

6. City and Village Schools.

In several of the cities and larger villages of the State, an increased interest has been manifested in the improvement of the public schools, and vigorous measures have been adopted for their advancement.

The report of the commissioners of school moneys of the city of New-York, for the year ending on the first of May last, exhibits a very favorable view of the condition and prospects of the several schools under the charge of the Public School Society, and the various charitable institutions participating in the public bounty. One hundred and nineteen schools have been kept open during the year, in which 41,385 children between the age of four and sixteen have been under instruction for a greater or less period of time; exceeding by several thousands the number returned by the commissioners in their last annual report. Of these, all excepting 1,828 were taught in the schools of the Public School Society, in which were enrolled 39,557 scholars between the ages of four and sixteen, and 397 children under the age of four years. The average quarterly attendance is stated at 25,163; and the average number in attendance during the whole year, at 15,936. Assuming the whole number of children between the ages referred to residing in the city, to be as returned by the U. S. Marshall in 1840, about 63,000; there will remain upwards of twenty thousand children of the proper age for instruction, not in attendance at any of the public schools in that city. Whether this result flows from any inherent imperfection in the prevailing system of public instruction, or is produced by a combination of causes not susceptible of the application of any practicable remedy, is a question which has recently been elaborately discussed, and well deserves the most careful consideration. It was first presented to the Legislature by the Governor, in his annual message of 1840, and again brought to their notice in that of 1841. At the last session the subject was thoroughly investigated by the late Secretary of State, on the reference to that officer by the Senate, of sundry petitions and memorials from the city of New-York, complaining of the unequal and oppressive operation of the present system of public schools in that city. In their annual report for the year ending on the first of May last, the Commissioners of school money of the city have deemed it their duty to enter into a full and elaborate examination of the several charges which have been urged against the system and its administration, and to defend the Public School Society against the imputation of a failure to accomplish the great objects for which

it was instituted. Notwithstanding the length of this document, the importance of the subject, and the interest which it has attracted, would seem to require that the usual custom of this department, with reference to the annual report of the commissioners of school money of that city, should not be dispensed with in the present instance. It will accordingly be found, together with the report of the late Secretary of State, to which it refers, in the appendix.

After the able and thorough discussion which this subject has received from the highest official sources, it would be presumptuous, as well as unnecessary, for the undersigned, whatever may be the views which he entertains in respect to it, to obtrude an opinion. It is for the wisdom of the Legislature to determine to what extent, and in what mode, an effectual remedy can be devised for the alleged disabilities of a numerous and respectable class of citizens, with reference to the education of these children; whether these disabilities spring from a radical defect in the peculiar system of public instruction, prevailing in the metropolis, or from a faulty administration of that system, which may be reached and corrected by means of a vigilant and efficient supervision; and whether the numerous excellencies of the plan of instruction connected with the schools of the Public School Society, cannot be retained consistently with such a modification of the present law as shall secure every practicable facility for the education of that large proportion of children now withdrawn, through conscientious or other motives, from the advantages of those schools. The intelligence and discrimination of the people and their representatives, may safely be relied upon, to separate the peculiar aspect which this question has recently been made to assume, and the excitement in the public mind to which it has given birth, from those high considerations of public policy which an enlightened regard to the paramount interests of universal education, and the welfare of the State imperiously demand. Our republican institutions recognize no distinction between the professors of different religious creeds; our shores are hospitably open to the inhabitants of every clime, and our systems of education were intended to embrace within their comprehensive influences every child of the republic of an age sufficient to be benefited by their instruction. With this view, and for this purpose, all our citizens, native and adopted, are called upon to contribute to the expenses incident to the maintenance of those systems; and all have an equal right to participate in their advantages. Any exclusion, therefore, theoretical or practical, from those advantages, of any portion of our countrymen, in consequence or as the result of peculiar modifications of religious faith, or for any other reason unrecognized by our laws, should under no pretence be suffered to exist. Such an exclusion has a direct and powerful tendency to promote the prevalence of ignorance, and its invariable attendants, wretchedness, vice and crime; while at the same time it sanctions the introduction of a new and fatal principle of public policy, deliberately discarded by the wisdom of the framers of our Constitution.

In the city of Buffalo the public schools are under the exclusive supervision of the Common Council, and of a city superintendent appointed by them; and their administration is conducted with a high degree of efficiency and success. In May, 1838, under a special act of the Legislature of that year, the city was divided into fifteen permanent school districts, in all of which schools were established, and have since been maintained. In several of the districts spacious and convenient buildings of brick, generally of two stories, have been erected for the use of the schools; and in all of them competent and efficient teachers have been employed at salaries varying from \$500 to \$800 dollars per annum. The Common Council are empowered by law to designate and purchase sites, and erect, improve, enlarge and repair school houses thereon, and to furnish them with suitable apparatus, books, furniture and appendages; and they are authorized to raise by tax from time to time, upon the real and personal property of the respective districts, such sums as they may deem necessary and proper for defraying the expenses incurred in accomplishing these several objects. By the annual reports of the city superintendent, it appears that the total number of children taught in all the public schools in 1837 was 679; in 1838, the number had increased to 1,149; in 1839, when the system became fully established, the total number taught had swelled to 2,450; and in 1840 to 4,068. In each of the districts, the schools have been kept open during the whole year, at an expense of \$8,875.30, of which \$1,585.18, only, was contributed by the State, and the balance, \$7,291.12, raised by taxation, and from rate bills. The school houses are each intended for two departments, in one of which a female teacher is employed, to superintend the instruction of the younger pupils, and in the other a male teacher, at a fixed and competent salary, to give instruction in the higher branches. An uniform series of school books has been adopted for all the schools, thereby obviating a great expense to parents, and materially conducing to the systematic improvement of the pupils. The prevailing system of instruction is monitorial. The city superintendent in his annual report for 1839, observes: "I think there is no hazard in saying, that there has never before been a set of schools in the city as uniformly good, either in an intellectual or moral view, as the public schools are, as at present organized." "The system now in operation has thus far

succeeded beyond the most sanguine hope of its projectors and friends. Its good effects are already apparent from the anxiety to obtain admission into the schools, the prompt and constant attendance of the children, and their correct and orderly deportment, while under the authority of the teachers. The system adopted is the only one which can successfully bring home the benefits of education equally to all; and the only question is, whether the thousands of children in this city shall be educated by means of the free schools, or whether a large majority shall grow up in ignorance and vice, and thus become a source of expense under our criminal statutes."

Prior to the adoption of the present system, the results of a careful examination of the number of schools of all descriptions in the city, the number attending them, and the annual expense of their instruction, disclosed the fact that the number of children in all the schools of the city, public and private, was 1,424 only; and the amount expended for their tuition, \$19,094, being \$13.41 per year for each scholar, or \$3.35 per quarter. An estimate of the annual expense of instruction of an equal number of children in the public schools, under the present system, shows an annual balance in favor of that system, of \$11,254, or a saving of nearly two-thirds.

These results afford a source of the highest gratification to every intelligent friend of sound education. They demonstrate the facility with which the juvenile population of our large cities may be brought within the influence of an enlightened system of public instruction; and the vast amount of time and money which may be saved, by the introduction of a systematic and efficient plan, under the supervision of competent and faithful public officers. It is mainly to the influence of the public schools that we are to look for the intellectual and moral improvement of the thousands of destitute children who are to be found in our large cities; and who, as all experience teaches us, unless they find an asylum here, will grow up in ignorance and vice, the miserable monuments of neglected education and perverted energies. By rendering the public schools competent to all the great purposes of intellectual and moral culture; by placing them under the immediate supervision and control of the city authorities, and by the concentration in their favor of an enlightened public sentiment, all classes of the community will participate equally in their advantages, at a trifling expense; the barriers which so frequently intervene between the wealthy and the indigent will no longer exist, and the equalizing influence of republican institutions will rapidly and spontaneously develop itself in advancing the standard of knowledge and sound morality, and in a general diffusion of the highest blessings of civilization.

A similar organization of the public schools has been recently adopted in the cities of Rochester and Hudson; and a system in some respects corresponding with it, already prevails in Brooklyn. The want of such a system is severely felt in the city of Albany, where, with a just and commendable liberality, substantial buildings have within a few years past been erected at the expense of the city, and where nothing is needed for the constant maintenance of public schools of the highest grade, but an efficient and concentrated supervision, permanent in its nature, and competent to the removal of every just cause of complaint.

The introduction in some of the larger villages of the State, of union schools, or the combination of a variety of separate district schools contiguously situated, into one of a higher order of excellence, has been attended with the happiest practical effects on the improvement of the system. By this admirable arrangement, all the children residing within the same village are brought together and placed under the charge of different instructors, corresponding to their respective ages and advancement; the public funds and the private contributions of parents are concentrated and judiciously applied in the employment of competent and experienced teachers; the public burdens consequent upon the support of the schools are more equally distributed; the taxable property of the inhabitants contributes to the erection of an elegant and substantial school building, adapted to the accommodation of the pupils, and constructed in accordance with improved modes of architecture; schools of the highest grade are constantly kept open; and these desirable and valuable objects are accomplished at an expense far short of that involved in the former system of separate schools.

GENERAL REMARKS.

These improvements in the organization and efficiency of the district schools in various parts of the State, are by no means limited in their influences to the territory in which they prevail. They afford an impulse to the cause of popular education which is broadly and extensively diffused. They redeem the character of the common school from the imputations which have so generally, and often with too much cause, rested upon it, as inefficient, sterile, and barren of practical instruction. They demonstrate its capacity, under proper management, and with the co-operation of public sentiment, not only to accomplish all the legitimate objects of its institution, but to provide a permanent system of instruction of a grade equal to that in our academies, high schools and colleges. There is no good reason why the common school should be restricted in its capacities for usefulness to the elementary branches of instruction. While these should be regarded as fundamental objects of its care, the higher branches of intel-

lectual and moral science should, wherever practicable, be introduced; and thus every pretence for keeping up that invidious distinction which has so long prevailed between these nurseries of our republican institutions, and the higher seminaries of learning, practically removed, by the elevation of the former to the grade of the latter. By the accomplishment of this object, we may reasonably look forward to that general diffusion of sound knowledge, pure morality, and elevated views and aims, which can alone sustain and invigorate our free institutions. The resources provided by the State are abundantly ample to carry into effect the most expanded views of the friends of education; the existing organization of the system is the result of long experience and profound deliberation; and it needs but an intelligent appreciation of the beneficial influences flowing from the permanent establishment in every section of our extended territory, of institutions adapted to the promotion of virtue and the cultivation of the intellect, to insure their permanency and continued improvement.

If there be one subject, which beyond all others may be regarded as of vital interest to the welfare and perpetuity of a free government, it is that of the EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE. Upon the intelligence and moral culture of the masses depends, under Providence, the ultimate and triumphant solution of the great problem of the age—the capacity of man for self government. There is no inherent virtue in mere institutions, however perfect—no magic charm in forms of government, however consonant to sound reason and political economy, which can dispense with enlightened knowledge and incorruptible public and private virtue, on the part of those for whom these institutions and forms of government are administered. Under such circumstances the inherent value and practical efficiency of our systems of education become of the highest import to those who look forward to the realization of those high destinies to which the great and the good of our own and of other climes have pointed our hopes. Much as may already have been effected for the promotion of this great object within our borders, a vast field of usefulness still remains unexplored; and no more interesting subject of deliberation and investigation for the legislator, the philanthropist and the patriot can be conceived, than is involved in the endeavor to expand, to their utmost limits, the beneficial influences of an enlightened system of public instruction. Important as are the agencies which our higher institutions of learning are enabled to fulfil, in the accomplishment of this high undertaking, it is to our COMMON SCHOOLS that we must chiefly look for the broad foundations of that civil and social superstructure which, as a people, we are engaged in erecting. It is here that those indelible impressions are stamped upon the youthful mind which determine the future character of the man and the citizen; here that the earliest and most vivid conceptions of the objects, ends and aims of social and moral discipline are imbibed; here that the habits and the disposition are moulded; and the intellect stored with those elementary principles of knowledge which are to form the basis of all subsequent advancement in the great work of education. It is here, too, that the practical operation of our republican institutions receives its most attractive and valuable illustration, in the mingling together, upon terms of perfect equality, of those to whom the guardianship and administration of these institutions are soon to be committed. How important, then, to the progressive advancement of society, in all its branches—the perpetuation, in our favored land, of civil and religious liberty, upon the basis of universal equality—to the general diffusion of truth, and the extirpation of ignorance and error, that these elementary institutions for the intellectual and moral discipline of the rising generation should be cherished and guarded with a vigilance corresponding to the high mission with which they are entrusted! If we would banish from our social system those corroding and destructive influences which, notwithstanding the progress of civilization and the increasing spread of knowledge, so frequently and fearfully develop themselves in the numerous and aggravated forms of crime, wretchedness and want, the sources of these calamities must be sought, and the springs of error dried up in the earliest expansion of the mental faculties. If we would accomplish the noble destiny involved in the successful experiment of self government, every citizen of our vast Republic must be taught to regard himself as a component and efficient part of a system designed for the general welfare, and deriving its sole support from the prevalence and diffusion of enlightened knowledge and public and private virtue.

SAMUEL S. RANDALL,

Acting Superintendent of Common Schools.

Albany, January 5, 1842.

A PRACTICAL EXERCISE.

This winter I introduced an exercise among my pupils, from which I found the most important advantages. I had indeed made some use of it in other schools, but never to any considerable extent. It consisted in incorporating—framing as we called it—words into sentences.

I was in the habit of dictating, or giving out to my pupils, each having his slate—a set of words, which they were required to write down. I always dictated very slowly, that all might have ample time. When the dictation was completed, they were required to exercise their ingenuity in so putting them into sentences

of their own construction that they would make sense, as part of those sentences.

Suppose the words dictated or given out, were *apples, corn, moon, hat, gold, red*; and suppose the pupils were required to incorporate them into sentences. The following might be the result of the efforts of some very young pupils.

Apples are good to eat. A new *hat*.
Corn grows. *Gold* is yellow.
The bright *moon*. A piece of *red* cloth.

Others would probably say much more. Perhaps their lists would read thus:

I am very fond of *apples*. I love to look at the *moon*.
My father raises *corn*. Some *hats* are made of wool.
Money is made of *gold* and silver and copper.
There is a bird called a *red* bird.

Sometimes I give them a much longer list than this, and require them to select a certain number of the words, such as they choose and "frame in." I have sometimes given out twenty or thirty words, and required them to select seven of those which appeared to them most interesting.

In other instances I have requested all those who preferred to do so, to select some favorite word, and relate, on their slates, a story about it; spending their whole time on that single word and the story. I have in this way, occasionally drawn out quite a long story from a boy who at first thought he could do nothing.

I recollect in particular, having given out, on a certain occasion, the word *bee* among the rest. One of my boys scarcely more than ten years of age, immediately wrote a long account of an adventure in a meadow, with a nest of humble bees.

Another mode of this exercise, still more interesting to some of my older pupils, consisted in framing as many of the words of the list as they could into a single sentence or verse. I have sometimes found a half a dozen or even more words crowded into two or three lines across the slate.

This exercise, in its varied forms and diversities, was one of the best I ever introduced into my school. It both interested my pupils and was a source of much instruction. I have sometimes wondered that it is not oftener introduced into schools. Its advantages, among others, are the following:

It is *novel*. Children, it is well known, are always fond of something new. They soon get tired of their old school exercises, as they do of their old playthings. A new exercise, now and then, though it were in its own nature no better than the old, would, in reality, be more valuable; simply from its novelty.

It teaches *spelling*. The pupil, in writing down his words, is expected to spell them correctly. Indeed I sometimes made this a part of the exercise; either going round from scholar to scholar, and examining the slates, or requesting them to bring them to me for examination. In this way more real practical knowledge of spelling was probably acquired, in a lesson of six words, than is sometimes gained by a whole page of words arranged in columns and learned by rote.

It is a capital exercise in *defining*. This indeed, was one leading object. No child can practice in this way without making rapid progress in the knowledge and use of words, especially of the words designed for the exercise. And since we have few text books in defining, this is the best exercise I am acquainted with for a substitute.

It is a good exercise in *writing*. I have known children become tolerable writers merely by writing on their slates. In any event, this exercise cannot fail to be of advantage in this respect.

It may furnish a *reading* lesson. It was customary with me to require my pupils to read their sentences, when thus framed. One great difficulty—perhaps the greatest—in teaching the young to read, is, that they do not enter into the spirit of the author's intention. Even when they appear to understand him, they fall much short of his meaning. But this difficulty is obviated when they form their own lessons. It cannot be otherwise than that they understand them. They must enter into their spirit. But if so, they can read them properly.

How often have I been told by my teachers—how often have I told my pupils the same thing—that the great rule in reading is to read as we talk? But it is next to impossible to read the language of others as we would talk it; because, after all, it is not our own language, it is that of another. Here, the language, as I have already observed, is the pupil's own, and it is not so difficult for him to read it as he would talk it. Indeed, most pupils would be apt to do so, so far as I have observed. Mine certainly were.

It is a valuable exercise in *composition*. Nowhere, perhaps, do the majority of teachers mistake more than in teaching the art of composition. They seem often to expect the pupil to have thoughts on subjects which are wholly beyond his capacity. Hence it is that they are required to write on abstract subjects; as "Good manners," early rising, beauty, riches and the like.—And hence it is, too, that the pupils so often dread the task.

I never knew a child that might not be led into the habit of composing with the utmost ease, provided he commenced right. Indeed, so far are they from having a dread of the exercise, I believe most of the young, with suitable management and encouragement, would be very fond of it.

In the case which has led to these remarks, I almost always found my pupils pleased with the idea of writ-

ting something of their own; although they were not always, it is true, equally pleased to exhibit it to the whole school; nor was this insisted on. How they would have regarded the exercise had I told them that one principal object I had in view, in requiring it, was to teach them composition, I do not know: perhaps I should have frightened them by a name which, by some means or other, is to the young almost odious.

It may be made an exercise in *geography*. We have only to give out suitable words as Boston, China, or Madeira, and encourage them to tell us all they know or can learn about these places; and it then becomes in effect, a lesson—often a very useful one—in this most interesting branch.

The same is true of several other things. By giving the names of distinguished men or women, as Alfred, Alexander, Howard, Newell, etc.; of curious beasts, birds or fishes; and of plants, minerals, etc., you may at the same time be doing something in the departments of history or biography, or in those of botany, mineralogy and the other branches of natural science. At least, the exercise will have a bearing upon the various sciences I have named: and will tend to furnish the keys to it.

There are several other important advantages resulting from this exercise. One is that it may be used in school to fill up any otherwise vacant moments. Such moments sometimes do occur. Children, for the time seem to have little to do, and are either dispirited or inclined to go to play. In this, or any other emergency, you can easily arrest their attention, and furnish them with pleasing and at the same time useful employment. To do this, all of them must, it is true, have slates; but I consider a slate as necessary to every pupil in the school, as a spelling book, and much more so; and during several of the latter years of my teaching, if parents would not furnish each pupil with a slate and pencil, I bought and loaned them to him.

Another advantage is that it improves in a most harmonious and happy manner, all the faculties of the mind. Memory is not in this case, as it too commonly is in school, exclusively cultivated; they are required to reflect, compare and judge. Especially does it improve the faculty of judging. This is perhaps its highest recommendation.

Lastly, it develops in a most wonderful manner, the peculiar habits and tastes of each individual. We hear much said—and justly too—of the importance of having an instructor understand fully the character of his pupils. Now I know of nothing that will accomplish this object so well as the foregoing exercise. It discovers at once, the leading propensities or characteristic traits of each pupil—I mean if you introduce and manage the exercise properly; otherwise you might defeat the whole intention of it.

If it be asked how this exercise discovers so remarkably the character of the child, I reply; by showing on what topics his thoughts dwell with most pleasure. It is curious indeed to see in what manner pupils will select from a list, say of fifty words, embracing every variety. Some will always select names of qualities or properties, as sweet, green or hot. Others always select names of number or quantity or amount, as thousands, pounds, etc. Others will select topics still different. But their leading traits of character will be still better known by the manner in which they treat their various topics. Boys of an enterprising or aspiring character will not only choose the name of some distinguished warrior or traveller, but recount more or less of his "glorious" deeds. Others, who are benevolently inclined, though they select even the same name, will relate his deeds of benevolence. Others still trained to the love of money or the gratification of their appetites, are very apt to drag into their little stories something that savors of rich eating or drinking, or of property.

Since I have spoken of conducting these exercises in a proper manner, it is necessary to add that I would always endeavor so to manage it as to have the pupils regard it as a favor; and not as a task. To this end it must not be too long continued, especially at first. It is always better to leave off a little earlier rather than not return to the same fare with a good appetite. Nor is it well to be too critical at first, especially with the exertions of the timid or diffident. By over, or rough criticism, I have sometimes so far discouraged beginners in this exercise, that they never completely recovered from the injury.

Indeed, all exercises in school, of whatever nature they may be, require, in the teacher, a large fund of plain good sense. No male or female teacher can take up any plan or method whatever, from another person, and introduce it into school, and render it permanently useful, without certain modifications or restrictions, to adapt it to the peculiar circumstances of themselves.—There is no method of teaching any branch in the world, which will always apply to the circumstances of all schools. It has been said that a coat properly cut and made will fit any body. But if this is obviously untrue, how much more untrue is it that particular plans and methods of teaching are adapted to all schools? For myself, I have no doubt that the exercise which I have here described, and which I deem a highly important one, would be of exceeding great value, in at least some of its features, to all teachers who would enter fully into its spirit. Here is one great secret of many methods of instruction. It is not the improved method itself which does the good, so much as the spirit of him who adopts it.—*Confessions of a School Master.*

DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL.

FRANCIS DWIGHT, EDITOR.

ALBANY, APRIL 1, 1842.

TO COMMISSIONERS OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
DEPARTMENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS,
Albany, March 21, 1842.

Various inquiries having been addressed to the Department relative to the propriety of including in the apportionment of public money for the present year, those districts the reports from which do not specify the length of time the scholars have respectively attended, during the year ending on the date of such reports, it is deemed proper to say that this requisition ought not to be enforced in the reports, upon which the present apportionment is based. Those reports include the whole of the year 1841: and as the law under which the particulars in question are required, did not take effect until June last, the necessary materials for complying with the requisition in its full extent, do not exist.

S. YOUNG,
Sup't Com. Schools.

STATE CONVENTION OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

A STATE CONVENTION OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS, in accordance with the generally expressed wish of these officers, will be held at UTICA on the FIRST WEDNESDAY of MAY next. The friends of education are respectfully invited to attend.

We trust this will be emphatically a business convention. The hour has not yet come, when we may assemble to celebrate the good accomplished; the work of reform is but commenced, and time is yet to try the result of our labors in this first, best cause of man. Our schools now rarely answer the object of their creation; even the humble arts of reading, writing and cyphering, are imperfectly and inefficiently taught; and all that properly constitutes education, all that tends to expand the mind, to elevate the sentiments and dignify the life, is almost invariably undervalued and neglected; while there is widely diffused throughout society, a paralyzing apathy, flowing from a want of appreciation of the condition and influence of the common school, that renders the labor of reform almost appalling.

It is to confer on these difficulties, and to awaken and combine energies to cope with and conquer them, that this Convention has been called together. The prominent evils that demand instant attention are, the excessive multiplication of private schools, the want of good teachers, convenient school houses, uniformity of text books, regular and punctual attendance, and an enlightened, active and pervading public opinion. Of these, the last is the grand motive power of all improvement; and if it can be evoked, that progress which is now difficult and almost impracticable, will become easy, sure and rapid. And we confidently believe, that an impulse will soon be given to public opinion, that shall carry it by the dead point of indifference, where it has so long rested, and give energy and power to every part of our gigantic school system. In truth, we feel that we might refer to the communications of the deputies, published in this Journal, for abundant evidence that the common mind is already awakening to this the greatest and most neglected interest of society.

Among the kindred evils that oppress and embarrass our schools, the first in virulence is the plague of innumerable and inconsistent text books. But we have so recently examined this subject, and suggested our views of its remedy, that we pass on to indicate the other topics that require attention.

The irregularity of attendance, is we fear much greater and its influence more blighting, than is conceived by those who are most inclined to question the results of common school education. It falls not only on the teacher, but on the pupil and parent, disheartening and disgusting every one who is concerned in the welfare of the district. More than one third of all the children who nominally attend our common schools, are, it is believed, constantly absent: not only losing the means of their own advancement, but impairing the advan-

ges of those who regularly attend, by disorganizing all classification and interrupting every plan of systematic study.

The multiplication of private schools, is both an effect of the degradation of our district schools, and also a cause of their continued embarrassment. Impoverishing the weak districts, and dividing the strong, they close the door against the moral and intellectual wants of the many, while they afford to none those advantages which the common school can be made to yield. We trust the day is at hand, when here, as in many towns in New-England, all conditions and classes will deem it a privilege to share in the benefits of the district school.

The last subject of consideration, we can touch, is the means of introducing a more judicious system of instruction, with its well devised methods for unfolding and invigorating the mental powers. Our teachers' departments have not yet met the public wants; they have supplied our schools with but few thorough teachers, and we are not aware that in any of them, the art of teaching is systematically and effectually taught. In Massachusetts, normal schools have been in successful operation for the last three years, and at the late session of its legislature, \$18,000 were appropriated to perpetuate their existence. We hail with great pleasure this evidence that the usefulness of these institutions has not only vanquished the prejudices of those who withstood their establishment, but made them their liberal friends. Is it not worthy of the consideration of this Convention, whether similar seminaries for teachers ought not to be established in this state?

On these, and on various other subjects, which will press on the attention of the Convention, we hope the deputies and the other friends of education, will be prepared to act discreetly, promptly and intelligently. And we would earnestly request the co-operation of all interested in the cause of education, to aid by their presence and counsels, in making this the commencement of a new era in the history of our common schools.

We are happy to inform the public, that there is reason to anticipate the attendance of distinguished advocates of the cause of general education, from our own and other states.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

YATES.

Penn-Yan, Feb. 21, 1842.

Dear Sir—The examination of the district schools of this county, has made me to some extent acquainted with their condition, and deepened my impression of the responsibility incurred by all who are charged with their management. The summer schools were taught by females, with very few exceptions, at an average compensation of six dollars per month. An average of seventeen scholars was found in attendance in districts containing over 50 children of school age.

The same districts were reported in 1840, as having an average of over 50 scholars taught. In 54 districts visited between the middle of Dec. and 1st of Feb. in which an average of 59 scholars was enumerated in 1840, 28 only were found in attendance, being less than one half the number ordinarily reported as taught, and which doubtless would dwindle to a much smaller number before the close of the schools. Schools are often found to have but one-fourth, one-fifth and even one-eighth part of the scholars in the district in attendance. This is owing to several causes, the most prominent of which is, a lack of those qualifications so necessary for the efficient government of the school and to render its exercises interesting and instructive. Some keep their children away in consequence of indecency and immorality, which the teacher cares not, or is unable to restrain; others partaking in the disgust their children feel with the dull round of unmeaning exercises, allow them to drop off; others alarmed at the prospect of a high rate bill, withdraw their children; and all forgetting their duty to sustain the trustees or apply the only proper remedy, permit the school to break up in confusion, and the little democracy for the time is in a state of complete anarchy.

An extract or two from my note book will give you some ideas respecting the character of our schools.

Visited school in district No. —; teacher well qualified; over 40 scholars in attendance, nearly all that live in the district; school in perfect order; exercises of an intellectual character; doctrines of analysis and association well understood and practised; teacher enjoys the confidence and support of employers, and consequently of scholars. Trustees and inhabitants co-operate promptly in measures for effecting a uniformity of text books and furnishing school apparatus. This school represents the character of a considerable number in the county, the most of which are remote from villages and select schools; the inhabitants relying

upon them alone and being determined on making them the best schools in the county, are sure of triumphant success.

Jan.—Visited school in —; teacher is engaged "doing a sum," house cold and comfortless; several classes read just two verses each and twice round without any correction from any one; teacher still at work at his "sum," has used up most of the afternoon; gives it up and requests my assistance, to demonstrate how much 300 lbs. coffee cost at 15 pence per pound. This, though an extreme case, hardly misrepresents a considerable number. The schools occupying the middle ground, are instructed by teachers of various grades of qualification, and evince to a greater or less degree the inattention of the inhabitants, and consequently unfaithfulness in their management: out of this indifference of the people, grows all the unfaithfulness of instructors, and inefficiency in the supervision of the school.

Many complain of an unnecessary multiplication of laws and regulations: whether this complaint be well or ill founded it is very certain that few of them are observed, that may be neglected without risking the loss of the public money. Would it not be conducive to the public morals to rescind such regulations as may be dispensed with, and insist on the remainder being complied with.

The remedy for the depressed condition of the schools is a plain one and easily applied. The people must give the same practical good sense to the supervision and management of their own schools, that they do to all other matters of much less importance, and the work will be accomplished.

If they will take the trouble to investigate they may easily satisfy themselves, that the improvement of their schools holds much the same relation to other improvements of infinitely less importance, that the railroad does to the corduroy bridge; and that however much they may increase their teacher's wages, and however liberal the public endowment, nothing short of their own personal attention, and an united systematic and vigorous effort will ever make them what they ought to be, and what they may be; institutions that shall dispense to high and low that equal intelligence which is the surest guaranty of equal rights. This is an enterprise with which party considerations must not be allowed to interfere: all should meet here on common ground; forget every difference of opinion, whether sectarian or political: and in an united effort to advance the interest of an institution, so essential to the well being of a whole people, draw more closely the ties that unite all as members of the same common country.

I remain truly yours,

H. C. WHEELER,

Deputy Supt. Common Schools, Yates co.

FRANCIS DWIGHT, Esq.

GENESEE.

Darien, February 21, 1842.

DEAR SIR—Until now I have delayed communicating to you on the subject of common schools in the county of Genesee, as I was unable to present the condition and character of the schools in the county until after visitation. I commenced the discharge of my duties on the 16th day of Nov. last. I have visited one hundred and twenty-one schools, very few of which, until the present season, excepting in the town of Bergen, have been previously visited by those who have an immediate interest. Perhaps I should here add, that the inhabitants of this town appear to have taken a deeper interest in the promotion of common schools, than in any other town in the county. Two years since an education society was formed, and a committee of male citizens was appointed to visit the winter schools, and a committee of the most influential female citizens to visit the summer schools. This important duty has been punctually discharged. The schools of this town have received an impulse from the exertions of her citizens, which has elevated and improved their condition. There are no select schools in town except one infant school. The common school is made the best school. In general competent teachers have been employed, whose compensation on an average is a little higher than the compensation of the teachers of other towns. Most of the schools in this county are making some improvement, but much remains yet to be accomplished. They have not been raised to as high a standard as the ability of the people can accomplish. In some places, particularly in villages, select schools are established which operate very much to the disadvantage of our common schools. In the village of Batavia, there are within the limits of districts No. 2, 3, and 4, four hundred and fifty children between the age of five and sixteen. One hundred and eighty-seven of whom, only, are taught in the common schools. The consolidation of those three districts into one, with competent teachers to instruct, has been agitated by some of the most influential citizens in the place, but has not yet been carried into effect. Those schools are supplied with competent teachers, who only want the aid and patronage of men of wealth and influence with which they are surrounded, to give that efficiency which will enable them to answer the purpose for which they were designed. The aristocratic and illiberal feelings of the wealthy are in some instances giving way to the idea of supporting the common schools as a matter of principle and policy. They begin to see that the common school system is the only means of extending to all, the advantage of education, and qualifying them as citi-

zens of this republic, to discharge their duties with honor to themselves and usefulness to their country. If our common schools are defective, let the energies of the people rich and poor, be directed to their support and elevation, let them erect suitable buildings, employ competent teachers, provide suitable books, and encourage teachers and scholars by frequent visitations. The novelty of a visitation by a officer under the late act, has excited some interest among the citizens of this county, many of whom have attended with me in my examinations. In nearly all the schools I have visited, some of the inhabitants have attended also. In some few instances, however, some opposition has been manifested to the law providing for the appointment of deputy superintendents, as unnecessary, and attended with an expense which will not yield a corresponding benefit to our schools. Such however, is not the general impression. It is believed, that even the anticipation of a visit, and a report of the actual condition of our schools, will have the effect to act upon teachers and scholars by all the incentives, that excite to a noble and manly exertion. It is also confidently anticipated, that opportunities afforded to deputies in their visitations will enable them to ascertain the best manner of instruction and discipline, which they will not fail to recommend to young and inexperienced teachers. Thus far I have found a great diversity of school books. This is an evil that exists in almost every school I have visited. It is a just cause of complaint, subjects teachers and scholars to much inconvenience, and parents to a heavy bill of expense. The remedy for this evil is anxiously looked for and expected through a convention of deputies. If this desirable object should be effected, a benefit will be conferred which will save an expense to the people more than sufficient to compensate the deputies for their services. It will not only relieve our schools from many impediments, arising from a variety of school books, but will be hailed as a new era in placing elementary education on one common basis.

DAVID NAY, Deputy Supt. Common Schools.

QUEENS.

Jamaica, March 2, 1842.

DEAR SIR—I have visited all the district schools in the county of Queens, in which a school was maintained, at the time of my visitation. I generally visit two schools in a day. After obtaining the information required by the Superintendent, I hear the different classes, in order to ascertain not only the amount of information possessed by the pupils, but to satisfy myself in regard to the ability of the teacher and particularly his or her method, or faculty of communication. I find a greater difference in different teachers than I expected. We have some district schools in the county of Queens, that are truly interesting, equal I presume to any in the state; and we have also some below mediocrity, owing chiefly to the want of well qualified teachers.

On the whole, I am convinced that our schools are in a much better condition than I expected when I commenced my labor of visitation. The office of Deputy Superintendent is very highly approved by the people generally, without distinction of party. Indeed, I have heard but one or two individuals say any thing whatever against the creation of the office. Our most intelligent and enlightened citizens unanimously say, that it is one of the best things that our legislature ever did.

I have thus far lectured publicly at the close of the examination of each school. In regard to my addresses I have been guided altogether by circumstances. In some of the districts I have had a numerous audience; in that case, I speak at some length on the subject of education and morals, the duties of town officers and of trustees. The mutual obligations of parents and children. I carefully look for every thing praiseworthy, and as carefully give credit for every improvement. I am convinced that it will not answer for the Deputy Superintendents to go over their respective counties with a fault finding spirit, if I may be allowed the expression. Trustees and the inhabitants do not generally like to be told, that their school house is old and dilapidated; that their school is behind other schools in the county, and particularly in the same town. Reproof must be given with caution. We must seek for opportunities of giving praise, and not reproach. As it has been wisely said, that "much depends upon the skillful management of the county superintendents," I am convinced of the truth of the assertion, and I am equally convinced, that since the creation of the office, and the appointment of those officers, an impetus has been given to the common schools never before known, if anticipated.

I find the same difficulties in regard to text books of which so frequent complaint is made in different parts of the state. I have carefully avoided the recommendation of any particular author, thus far, hoping that a uniform system will be the result of a state convention of my fellow laborers. I have advised the trustees in each district where there has been any complaint, to call the attention of the district to the subject, and thus to agree as to what text books shall be used, at least in their respective schools, so that if there be a change of teachers there shall be no change of books.

I am, most respectfully, your obt. serv't,

PIERPONT POTTER,

Deputy Supt. of Queens co.

FRANCIS DWIGHT, Esq.

ONONDAGA.

Canal, March 10, 1842.

DEAR SIR—I have just closed my course of visitation to the schools of my charge. Thus far I have been received with the utmost cordiality. Even in districts where local difficulties exist, both parties have hailed me in friendship. If I may judge from the spirit of those I have seen, and from the very few expressions of disapprobation I have heard, I should conclude the citizens of this section approve the efforts now making on behalf of the schools.

I have proceeded with the utmost caution in my examination of the schools, as I hold, that no measure however wise, will avail unless made acceptable to those for whom it is designed. Perhaps nothing is more essential in this work, than making the visitations and examinations acceptable to the pupils themselves. The schools are unaccustomed to being visited. They should therefore be approached gently and very gradually, until they become inured to examination, when I doubt not, they will hail the period with both pleasure and pride. I find it possible, even now, to go some length in correcting the evil habits and wrongs of the schools, by a prudent course in the outset. It is indeed amusing to observe the manifestations of that jealousy of rights, so natural to every American, on first entering a school. And it is equally encouraging to discover the altered expression of countenances that always occurs when an approach has been skillfully made. But it is not necessary to give an essay on these obvious matters—I will offer a few facts for your consideration.

My field of labor embraces one hundred and ninety districts and parts of districts. In these I have found one hundred and sixty-four schools in session. To visit these, I have travelled nine hundred and twenty-eight miles over a diversified country. Some of the schools are worthy of commendation for their good order and advancement in learning. I am sorry not to be able to say as much of them all. Too many are deficient in discipline and government, and in the mode of instruction exercised in them, not being suitably provided with teachers and books. Yet I can say of these that a new power seems to have arisen in them or many of them, since the institution of the late law.

Great irregularity prevails as to attendance, as may be seen from the fact, that out of nine thousand one hundred and thirty pupils, no more than five thousand three hundred and eight are found to attend regularly. Much remissness prevails as to furnishing suitable houses and proper apparatus. More than one hundred and twenty houses are in a state of decay, and only forty-eight are furnished with black boards. It is scarcely necessary to say that a great diversity of text books exists in every school, or that the effect of this is an enormous increase in the number of classes. The fact is, in the one hundred and sixty-four schools, there are over two thousand classes. In addition, the general course of study and method of instruction, are undergoing a constant change with every new teacher. Very little regard is paid to the laws of mind, in teaching in the schools, or to the principles of human action in governing them. At these long continued obstacles some have become disheartened. From the present plan they expect a remedy: those engaged, therefore, should be aware and endeavor to satisfy those expectations.—As I differ from some, with respect to the method of improving the schools, I may in a future communication state my views of the subject to your department, and submit for your consideration, a plan for effecting uniform text books, and a more efficient mode of instruction. More undoubtedly may be done by the adoption of general self-regulating principles brought to bear upon the internal regulation of the schools, than by all other operations put together. Improve the schools, and the people will flock to them. "Where the carcass is, the eagles gather together."

Your obt. serv't,

CHAUNCEY GOODRICH,
Dep. Supt Northern Section, Onondaga co.

HON. SAMUEL YOUNG, Supt Com. Schools.

[A very respectable number of schools have called for a standard course of study and examination, and in order to give it the necessary influence, I wish to submit it for your amendment and approval. The summer schools will generally commence on the first of April, and most of them wish to have the regulation at the commencement. Your approval, with such additions and alterations as appear to you advisable, would, in my judgment, greatly aid the adoption of a very essential arrangement. My colleague, Mr. Edwards, joins me in the plan of regulation. Your approval or disapproval, as soon as consistent with your convenience, will lay me under obligation.

C. G.]

DISTRICT SCHOOL REGULATION.

The following arrangement is respectfully submitted, for the consideration of the several town inspectors and trustees of school districts, and if approved by them or a majority of them, it will be put up in every school house as the rule of the school.

There will be three visitations of each school in each year. The following will be the course of examination at each visitation. Teachers will direct the course of study accordingly.

First Visitation.

Reading, with clear and distinct articulation, proper execution of the pauses, rising and falling inflections, emphasis and cadence.

Spelling, with distinct articulation of the letters, right division of letters into syllables, and correct pronunciation.

Orthography, by parsing the sounds of letters in words separately, and by giving abstract examples of their powers.

Writing, with reference to fair and uniform letters, order and regularity of the lines, freedom from blots, and correct spelling.

Defining Words, by oral descriptions of their meaning.

Second Visitation.

The same as above with the following additions:

Arithmetical Tables, by the whole school.

Geography, according to the books in use.

Rules of Arithmetic.

Third Visitation.

The same as the two foregoing, with the addition of Explanations of Rules in Arithmetic, and parsing in English Grammar.

Each school will be duly notified of the days of examination. Teachers will be previously furnished with printed forms for a statement of the order of their schools. An account will be taken at each examination, of all correct performances by the pupils, and at the close of the year, the schools of the several towns will be classified into first, second and third classes, according to their character: and statistical pamphlets, embracing this classification and such other matters in relation to the schools, as may be deemed interesting, will be furnished to each district adopting this regulation.

To Teachers.

Great failure exists in district schools, through want of due care in the instruction of pupils to read with proper tones and loudness of voice, and with sufficient slowness and precision to be duly heard and understood.—Good habits in respect to reading, spelling and writing, would benefit the schools more highly and entitle teachers to more credit, than rapid advances through other subjects before these habits are duly established.

The state of the schools in this respect, will have greater bearing upon granting licenses to teachers, than all other evidences put together, order and morality excepted.

In accordance with the request of the County Superintendents of Onondaga, I have considered the regulations proposed for their guidance in examining the schools under their supervision, and think them well adapted to give efficiency to their official labors. I refrain, however, from recommending their general adoption, until experience shall have tested these and similar plans, and from all, sanctioned the best for the benefit of the whole state.

I would avail myself of this occasion, to express my gratification at these and many similar proofs of intelligent devotion to duty, on the part of the Deputy Superintendents of the various counties.

SAMUEL YOUNG,

Supt of Com. Schools.

OSWEGO.

Phenix, March 7, 1842.

Dear Sir—Having just closed my tour through that part of the county which was assigned to me, I thought it might not be improper on this occasion, to correspond with your department in regard to the actual condition of our schools, as I have found them. And here I will remark that as a general thing the schools in this part of the county are in a very backward condition, although there are some few districts, whose schools, I think, are not inferior to any district schools in the state. In fact I have found some that were as forward, and under as good management as any of our select schools, (and why may they not all be so?) I have also found others that I think cannot be surpassed in backwardness, and the disinterestedness and negligence of the parents and others directly concerned in them. In districts where parents take a lively interest in their school, and are in the habit of manifesting their interest by frequent visitations, I have invariably found the schools in a prosperous condition. And here permit me to remark, for the credit of those who are usually denominated Yankees, that as a general rule, I find them manifesting more of an interest and anxiety for the welfare of our common schools, than natives of our own state: and wherever I have found a neighborhood settled with "Down Easters," I have also found good schools. So much for the force of habit.

In some few districts I have discovered a gross indifference and carelessness, on the part of the patrons of the schools, and although I should send them word of my intended visit, yet none of them would make their appearance. In these places, I found backward schools, backward teachers, a backward district, and a strong prejudice to the new system; and in fact any system for the improvement of the schools, unless it be a gratuitous one. In such districts, I find the Libraries made but little or no use of, and hear the most bitter anathemas heaped upon our authorities for compelling them to purchase books with the money that is given them. As a general thing, however, the inhabitants are disposed to visit their schools with me, and render me all the assistance in their power in the discharge of my duty.

You will have been convinced, ere this, that the office of Dep. Supt. is any thing but a sinecure, and its duties arduous in the extreme. I have, however, full confidence in the system, and believe its beneficial effects have already begun to be realized.

I consider the patronage which has for a few years been given to select schools, as one of the greatest obstacles in the way of District Schools; and I indulge strongly in the hope, that the time is not far distant, when the latter will have been so improved, as to entirely do away the necessity of the former.

As my limits will not allow me to be minute, I will simply state one of the greatest defects that I have discovered in teachers, and one which I have labored hard to remedy. That is *formality*. I am a friend to regularity and order; indeed, I consider them *indispensable*. But I do detest a cold careless *formality*. For instance, the school is called in the morning—the first class reads—then the second—third—fourth and so on. Next a recess—then after hearing a few hurried recitations, the 4th class is called upon to spell—then the 3d, 2d, 1st, and that is the signal for closing the school. During all of these exercises the teacher allows himself to be continually harassed, with the other scholars—some wanting pens mended—some copies—some call upon him for assistance in arithmetic—others in geography, and others in grammar, &c. &c. I have known teachers to allow of this kind of confusion, without being able to overlook scarcely a verse that was read, until the class had “read around,” and another was called on. Thus one day succeeds another, in the same formal routine; every thing going on at a time, and nothing done as it should be. If deputy superintendents can succeed in breaking up this order of things, (I might rather say disorder,) and persuade teachers to do but one thing at a time, and do that *just right*, and never leave a class till they know they have got a thorough knowledge of the subject, it will be accomplishing much towards effecting the desired reformation. I am fully of the opinion that half a day in a week, set apart for reading, with no other exercise to interfere—requiring every scholar's attention—with instructions and examples given by the teacher, and care and attention exacted from the scholars, would confer more *real* benefit upon a school, than they usually derive from the whole week's reading in the ordinary way. Much in the same way I would prefer having the other exercises conducted. I think that deputy superintendents should be strenuous in their charge to the teachers, that they allow no exercise to be performed in school in a careless and formal way. We have an old maxim, that “whatever is worth doing at all, should be done right.” This maxim should be observed in all of our every day concerns; and how much more necessary, that it should be taught children at school.

The greatest fears, I entertain in regard to the system is, that deputy superintendents will be too easy with teachers; and especially with respect to granting licenses. Here, I think, the deputy should adopt a rigid course, and grant no license unless the applicant is every way worthy: and in no case to give a certificate until he has visited the school and satisfied himself of the ability to teach, as well as the moral character and bearing of the candidate. Unless a rigid course is adopted in this particular, the system will surely fail. I am determined for one to drive every faithless teacher from my district, and compel them to emigrate to John Brown's tract, or give up teaching. I can have no sort of patience with a lazy, sleepy “loafer,” who will engage in teaching school, merely for the sake of getting into decaat society, and securing a snug harbor for the winter, when I am satisfied he takes no real interest in the welfare of the scholars, or the improvement of the system. I look forward with warm anticipations to the convention of deputies, and cannot but believe that some measure will be taken to give a favorable impulse to the system. Shall we not be favored with the presence of our state superintendent?

Yours respectfully,

O. W. RANDALL.

Deputy Sup't. Oswego county.

Hon. SAMUEL YOUNG, Sup't of Common Schools.

P. S. I cannot close this communication, without publicly acknowledging my obligations to the citizens of the western-jury district of this county, for the kind hospitality manifested towards me; for which they will please accept my unfeigned thanks.

MADISON.

Canastota, March 16, 1842.

SIR.—The absolute necessity of order and good government in our Common Schools, is not sufficiently urged upon the popular mind. No child can learn anything in the midst of clamor and confusion, and teachers should be made to understand that good government will be required of them. It makes me heartily sick, to visit a school room of seventy or eighty scholars, and find them all whispering, shoving around, running across the house, going in and out at pleasure, without being under any controlling influence of their teacher. Children are far better off at home than at such a school.

A teacher manifests great chagrin when visited under such circumstances, and certainly he ought to feel ashamed.

A school room ought to be as still at all times, as a church at sermon time: and it is an easy matter to have it so, if the teacher be possessed of any judgment and perseverance. Children, small and large, can soon be made

to know they must sit still in school. Yes, in one week, and even less time, a teacher can satisfy a school that they must do as he says, and thereafter the whip and the ferule will be needed no more. I do not mean to convey the idea that the whip and ferule are to be the grand charms and instruments to work this order and harmony, but I mean that the school should understand that these will be certainly resorted to, in case love and persuasion will not answer the desired end.

It is undoubtedly advisable for all who have that care of children as instructors, to seek the affections of their schools as the first means of gaining a control of their actions. But the man who supposes that our country district schools can be governed by entreaty or persuasion, without the exercise of fear of some kind of punishments, must have a very limited knowledge of the elements he will have to deal with in the school room, besides having a philosophy not well founded or adapted to facts.

Many parents object to having their children in anywise punished at school. “Inform us,” say they to the teachers, “and we will punish our children if they shall need to be punished.”

Now one thing I desire to state as a truth, without any exception, that within my experience, I never knew an instance of proper parental government being sustained at home, by one solitary person who ever objected to the proper government being enforced by a teacher at school. Fathers and mothers, who take the position that their children ought to be allowed to act *ad libitum* at school, are the last ones who would be disposed to inflict salutary correction in case of reported charges against their children.

Children ought to be instructed that whilst attending school, they are “subject to the powers that be” in their teachers, and that there is no appeal in cases of necessary and proper punishments, imposed to compel obedience and good discipline; and then there will be but very few instances of corporal punishments. But as it now is, many parents and many more children, entertain the erroneous opinion that teachers have no power to punish, and consequently many scholars have to be corrected in their opinion by “striped jackets,” before they will yield to obedience.

I have been called upon professionally, in several instances, to defend teachers who have been arraigned criminally, for assaults and batteries for punishing scholars, and in cases too, where the teachers would have fallen short of duty if they had failed to have done what they did. These prosecutions have resulted from ignorance of the law, and the teacher came out justified. But where the law has been expounded, and the necessity and utility of its applications have been explained, the people have approved.

While teachers should know they cannot be tyrants, children should understand they are *subjects of obedience and correction, while at school*. It would be a sad thing indeed, if rude boys could curse, swear, kick, fight, and indulge in vulgarities and obscenities at pleasure, and in company with the little girls sent to school to receive good instructions, without being in anywise responsible to their teachers.

I have not failed to urge these considerations upon the minds of children in schools, and parents in meetings where I have lectured.

“Order is Heaven's first law,” and if there is a place on earth where it ought to be maintained, it is in the school room, where the young minds are receiving their first impressions and directions to guide them through life.

F. DWIGHT, Esq.

Dep. Sup't.

MADISON.

Pratt's Hollow, March 11, 1842.

DEAR SIR.—The circular of 1839, containing laws relating to district libraries and of the extension of the time from three to five years for applying one-fifth of the public money for books, was not received by a large number of districts in this county. Supposing that they had complied with the legal requisitions with regard to the library money, and viewing its further application for the enlargement of the library of doubtful utility, many districts have passed resolutions to apply it the present year to the payment of teachers' wages, and the trustees consider themselves bound to act in accordance with such resolutions. A few remarks from you through the medium of the District Journal, will correct all misunderstanding and prevent much perplexity upon this subject.

Yours respectfully,

EDWARD MANCHESTER,

Deputy Supt. Common Schools, Madison co.

Hon. SAMUEL YOUNG, Supt. Common Schools.

It can only be necessary to say, in answer to the above communication, that Trustees of School Districts as well as inhabitants, are bound to conform to the specific provisions of the law, which requires the Library money to be appropriated exclusively to the purchase of books, until the spring of the year 1844.

SAMUEL YOUNG, Supt.

WASHINGTON.

Middle Granville, March 18, 1842.

DEAR SIR.—Having nearly finished visiting the schools in my part of the county for the first time; I take a few leisure moments to communicate with you. The same evils which exist in other parts of the state, are

also found here; the great number of miserable houses in which four children are crowded; the uncomfortable seats on which they are confined; the dearth of text books, and the endless variety of those they do have; the apathy of parents; the unfitness of many teachers, and the entire omission of duty of some of the inspectors, are indeed evils of no ordinary magnitude, and will require the vigorous and persevering efforts of all the friends of our country and of the race to eradicate. But I am happy to say, these evils are not universal; here and there scattered all over the land, is found a school such as it should be; where the parents look first to the *qualifications* of the teacher, rather than to his *price*; where the school is often visited by them, and a deep interest taken in the improvement and welfare of their children. In such places dwell the hopes of our own beloved country.

The longer, I attempt to discharge the duties of my office, the greater the responsibility appears that rests upon me, and those acting with me. We have access to the minds of most of our children and youth; and we come to them under circumstances calculated to make our suggestions heeded and followed. How important then, that we give such advice as, if followed, will make them better calculated to act well their parts in life.

I have made it a rule, at the close of the examination of each school, to make a familiar address to the scholars, on the importance of cultivating their *minds, morals and manners*: the duties they owed to each other, their teacher and their country. I also make such suggestions to the teacher in private, as the case seems to demand. And I am happy to say, that the teachers generally are desirous of receiving advice, and express a willingness to reduce it to practice.

Too many of the inspectors neglect their duties for fear the town will complain of the *expense*; and thereby their own popularity, or that of their party will be endangered. Thus it is, the “Almighty dollar,” is uppermost in our thoughts, and any plan that has for its object the improvement only of the *intellects* or *morals* of the people, and which lessens the amount of cash in our pockets, is looked upon with distrust and aversion. But sir, notwithstanding all these obstacles, I feel encouraged. There are cheering indications of reform. The people are beginning to think. I have had in most of the towns the cordial and efficient co-operation of the inspectors, and other gentlemen of high-standing and influence, and if the deputies are true to their high trusts, a gradual but certain improvement will take place; and our common schools become fit places to train up those who will soon occupy all the stations of honor and trust in this great republic.

I will only add, that I have just been in a few schools, that I visited early in the winter; and without going into particulars, would say that I am highly pleased with their appearance. The course suggested has been followed, and a decided and gratifying advancement has been made by the scholars.

Respectfully yours,

ALBERT WRIGHT,

Deputy Supt. Common Schools.

F. DWIGHT, Esq.

CLINTON.

Chazy, March 14th, 1842.

DEAR SIR.—I have now completed my first tour of visits to the schools in this county. I have hitherto neglected to furnish communications for your valuable Journal, because I wished in the first place to make a complete survey of our noble county. This I have done. Every school and almost every district has been visited. It is with unfeigned pleasure that I revert to the scenes of the past winter. This pleasure is heightened by the reflection, that my undivided attention has been devoted to the interests of our schools, and I would acknowledge with gratitude, both in my own and in behalf of the department, the encouraging co-operation and kind attentions of the friends of education and the rising generation. I believe, sir, there is an increasing interest throughout the county for the improvement of our *common schools*; may that interest continue to increase, till those evils now so deeply felt and deplored shall be known only in the memory of the past! I believe I have ever truly loved my country, but never have I felt that ardent devotion, which I have experienced while laboring for the welfare of our youth—the future hope of the country, and for the improvement of our schools—the nurseries of the nation. I shall hail with pleasure the time for the commencement of my summer tour, when I may be permitted to renew my acquaintance, so agreeably commenced, with the scholars, teachers and patrons of our schools. A tie has been formed which can never be severed, and never shall I forget the hearty “God bless you!” which has followed me from many districts.

I found the schools generally, in better condition than could have been expected. I would like to describe some of our best schools, and mention the names of the teachers with the commendation they deserve, were it proper to do so in this letter, and I would like to describe some of our worst schools—no, I will not dignify them with the name of schools—some of our *little bellams*, and delineate some of their proceedings, from the youngest up to the head bedlamite—the teacher—but I forbear. To the honor of our county be it said, we have but few, very few of the almost nameless things alluded to, and the number of excellent schools and efficient teachers is constantly augmented. We trust that in the light thrown upon the

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subject before us, by these new and salutary measures, we behold the dawn of a brighter day, a day full of glorious promise to our country.

I have found in many schools the same evils described in communications from deputies of other counties, I believe they are common to all schools. They are too well known to need farther comment.

My mode of procedure is similar to that generally adopted, and described in the writings of the Journal. I endeavored as nearly as practicable to follow the directions of our Superintendent. At first I visited only one school in a day. In the forenoon I entered the school and made the investigations necessary for report, while the teacher without dictation was proceeding with the usual exercises of the school in the usual manner, and myself the while taking notes on whatever was passing. In the afternoon the trustees and inspectors were to visit with me, and then any change or improvement necessary were to be made, the teacher having been previously conversed with on the subject. Not having sufficient time during the winter term to visit all the schools in this manner, I was obliged to relinquish the plan and visit two schools per day. I regretted this, because one district must lose the evening lecture where they could not unite.

I entered upon the discharge of my official duties about the middle of November, and have been constantly engaged till the present time, visiting schools and giving evening lectures in the various districts through the county, at first in every district, and then in one out of two. I trust this has been the feeble means of producing much good, and it has been exceedingly gratifying thus to meet the patrons of the schools, and in a familiar manner discuss those subjects which so highly interest us all.

I was glad to see the notice for a convention at Utica, of county superintendents and the friends of common schools. I can only say, I hope it will be well attended, and productive of great good to our state.

I wish to call the attention of the citizens of Clinton, to the necessity and practicability of establishing a teachers department, and in connection with it a model school in this county. Plattsburgh is undoubtedly the best location. The wants of the county imperatively demand that such or similar measures be taken. Let speedy and suitable efforts be made, a department established equal to the importance of the object, one hundred teachers be gathered into it, and a model school under the superintendence of suitable persons, set in operation, where these teachers can practice under his direction, and receive instruction in relation to the best mode of teaching, classifying and disciplining schools and the standard of common school education, teachers, and influence will be vastly elevated in the scale of excellence.

The recent enactments and proceedings in relation to schools are worthy of the empire state, and reflect much honor upon those who have been engaged in them. May they exceed the high expectation of their warmest advocates, till intelligence, patriotism and morality, shall spread their triple banner over this highly favored state, and to our beloved country heaven born truth shall descend, bearing her peace-branch from above.

D. S. T. DOUGLAS,
County Supt. Common Schools.

FRANCIS DWIGHT, Esq.

West Chazy, February 24th, 1842.

[Extracts from a letter addressed to the Deputy.]

D. S. T. DOUGLASS, —SIR—The lecture that you, as superintendent of common schools, delivered at Chazy Corners, upon the condition of the schools in this county, and your beautiful illustration of the power of the human mind, gave entire satisfaction to all present. As I feel, sir, an anxious desire for your success in your high official duties and responsible station, I beg you to receive this expression of my interest in the course that you have taken to raise the standard of our common schools, and to establish a system of sound education. It appears to me, that the wisdom of our Legislature could not have devised a better plan to advance learning, and bring our common schools into high repute, than the appointment of deputy superintendents; as their whole time and talents are devoted to that subject, and they have an opportunity of looking into the condition and of correcting the evils of every school in the state.

Lecturing is in my opinion of vital importance. It brings together the parent, teacher, and child, and presents to each those motives to duty, which alone can secure the improvement of our schools. Allow me to express the general gratification your public addresses have received, and my belief, that they contribute much to awaken that interest, which is the main spring of all progress.

How admirably adapted are the first rudiments of education to the mind. The mind of the child is weak. The first rudiments are plain, simple and easy; and if these are heedlessly passed by, the scholar will ever grope blindly in the portals of knowledge, and though years may come to him, they will neither bring wisdom nor understanding. Besides, it is unnatural and revolting to the mind, to go back again into the lower branches, after it has attained some knowledge of the higher.

From experience I have discovered this error in our common schools, and too frequently in the inspection of teachers, and I am confident that you concur with me

in this point, and that your influence will correct the evil. I think, sir, that our common schools will be greatly improved under your superintendence; I approve your whole plan of instruction—system—order—frequent visiting schools—sound and practical education, &c. I tender you, sir, my grateful acknowledgments, and will give you my cooperation as far as practicable, and hope success will crown your labors.

I am, sir, very respectfully,
Your friend and obd't serv't.

ISAAC MELRIDGE.

HAMILTON.

Morehouseville, March 9th, 1842.

DEAR SIR—I have visited most of the schools in this county. Owing to the sparseness of the population and the state of the roads, a number of districts have no schools during the winter. The schools that I have visited are generally backward, and I am sorry to say, in some places but little interest is felt in the cause of education. In one district that I visited, numbering about forty-five scholars, between the ages of five and sixteen, no school had been taught for months; and although the trustees pledged themselves to commence a school immediately, near two months have passed and they are yet without a school. But amidst the general dearth and wildness, it is cheering to find in some places individuals and districts alive to the subject of common schools, and ready cordially to lend a helping hand for their improvement. In some of the districts well qualified teachers are employed, and the consequence is evident to all. One thing I have remarked, that in every instance *cheap teachers are poor teachers*, and scarce one deserves the name of "teacher," whose compensation is less than twelve dollars per month. And yet many districts are so blind to their own interest, as to employ individuals wholly unqualified for the arduous task of teaching, simply because they can be obtained for from eight to ten dollars per month.

I might reiterate the general cry of the want of a uniform series of text books, but I forbear, enough has been said upon that subject.

I have as yet had no occasion to annul a certificate, and for the reasons above stated, have given but few licenses. I feel encouraged, notwithstanding the difficulties that I have to encounter, from the favor and hearty cooperation I receive from the leading men of this county; and feel assured, that Hamilton will yet arise and stand beside her sister counties in moral and intellectual worth.

Yours respectfully,

BETHUEL HOLCOMB,

Deputy Supt. Hamilton co.

Hon. SAMUEL YOUNG, Supt. Common Schools.

FRANKLIN.

DEAR SIR—You are unquestionably aware, that the county, over the schools of which I preside, is comparatively new, and therefore subjected to those disadvantages which impede the progress of learning, and which are always the accompaniments of a new country. In my travels through the county, I meet with much to approve and much to condemn. There however, appears to be an inclination among the inhabitants, to cooperate with the exertions now made, to ameliorate the condition of our common schools. The pecuniary resources of many of the districts, are as yet, quite too limited to furnish all the appurtenances conducive to the prosperity of the schools. The most prominent obstacles against which we have to contend, are collisions in the districts and a diversified set of text books. The latter we hope will be remedied at the contemplated convention of deputy superintendents. After having completed my circuit, I design to contribute to the columns of the Journal.

I remain, dear sir, yours truly,

D. H. STEVENS.

F. DWIGHT, Esq.

Deputy Supt.

CATTARAUGUS.

SIR—There is scarcely any reflection that is the occasion of more frequent regret among the generality of men, than that the first period of their existence was not spent in the most profitable employment of time.—And, indeed, this fault which is so commonly lamented, is the origin of most of the real evils which we suffer. For that a man's happiness depends upon his own moral fitness or susceptibility, and that in this respect, his manhood will conform to the instructions which he has received in his youth, is a proposition based both upon reason and revelation. In other words, his character and destiny are determined by his education.

I conclude, therefore, that he whose business is to cultivate the minds of children, to give a right direction to their thoughts and inclinations, to fortify them against vice, by pre-occupying their minds with the solid acquisitions of wisdom and science, occupies the very station to which his ambition ought to lead him, if he aspired to perform the most essential service to mankind. And it is almost a matter of surprise as well as regret, that among the many benevolent individuals of this age, who have distinguished themselves by their efforts to better the condition of their fellow men, and remove the ills which they endure, so few have been willing to undertake the work of juvenile instruction, the only field in which their labors are sure to be rewarded.

How many of the errors and follies which men fall into, would be avoided, if their understandings were properly informed, and their minds stored with wise

maxims in childhood, and how many of the miseries would be prevented which those errors and follies have produced.

Whilst every one who labors to improve the intellectual, moral and political condition of society, is justly deserving of public gratitude, and worthy to be accounted a real philanthropist, he who has the charge of the mental culture of youth, exerts a power far more decisive than all others put together. In the responsibility of this charge, the parent, the guardian, and the tutor all share. Their influence is direct, positive and effectual; and they may promise themselves absolute success, in endeavoring to form the common mind according to the dictates of reason and truth.

The obvious conclusions to which these observations lead, is, that the business of education is of the highest concernment, and that the office of an instructor of youth is one of zeal, dignity and importance; and in a political point of view, their importance in this country, is very much enhanced, in consequence of the liberal principles upon which our government is based. In respect to the political power which they exercise, all the citizens are placed upon a footing of perfect equality, without any discrimination in regard to intelligence or honesty; and rightly too, for it is much wiser in the state to aim at conferring a suitable education upon all its citizens, than to exclude any class from a participation in the government for the want. And this appears to have been the opinion of Jefferson, who had a higher sense of the necessity of a liberal and extended system of popular education, than almost any other man of his time. For he very well knew, that to render the people the safe depositories of political power, their minds must be cultivated to a certain extent; otherwise they would be liable to be imposed upon by artful and designing leaders, and become instruments to subserve the ends of private ambition, and so, would only have exchanged the character of subjects for that of dupes.

We are endowed with an instinctive desire for knowledge; and so constituted, that every discovery, every new attainment in science, administers pleasure to the mind. We are never satisfied with present acquisitions, but always longing to catch a glimpse at the objects that lie beyond the present boundaries of our mental vision. And our toils in this pursuit, are never left unrequited for a moment. Our recompense is always at hand. It is meted out to us at every step of our advancement, so that "labor itself is a pleasure," and is emphatically its own reward.

Thus, as Horace declares, "all Heaven stands ready to assist the wise," and God, by identifying the pursuit of knowledge with that of happiness, is beckoning us onward to study, that we may adore his own infinite and incomprehensible nature.

The round of sensual gratifications is exceedingly limited, and soon ends in satiety. But in the admirable arrangement which we have just been contemplating, a source of pleasure is opened which is inexhaustible.—The human mind may continue to advance in a knowledge of its Creator and his works, millions of ages and yet new volumes of science will be unfolded for its study, and new scenes of beauty and grandeur burst upon its enraptured vision.

How much more valuable, then, are the treasures of knowledge than those of gold and silver, since it is only the former that we shall carry with us beyond the grave. When Priene was invaded by a public enemy, and the citizens had fled with their goods, Bias alone, carried nothing away, replying to those who asked the reason of his improvidence, that he carried all his goods within him. I suppose he had a thorough conviction that even "the house of his earthly tabernacle," would sooner or later, be invaded and laid waste by the "king of terrors." This made him bestow all his labor and culture upon the immortal part, that it might escape at a moment's warning and carry all its valuables along with it.

The culture which is bestowed upon the mind in the development of its powers is denominated education.—It commences at the first moment of our existence, and will be completed only when our understandings become so enlarged that we can comprehend at one glance of mind all the mysteries of the Universe, with the being and attributes of its adorable author. This great terrestrial edifice is erected for our present accommodation. The great book of nature is spread open to every eye, with lessons of instruction adapted to all capacities, from the youngest child and most illiterate savage, to the most profound philosopher. Every leaf and flower, every created thing, sentient or insentient, organized or unorganized, contains a lesson for man. At every point a multitude of varied and harmonious voices salute the ear of reason, and their language is, READ.

Go to the tops of the mountains, descend to the valleys, survey the woods and the lawns, and there "doth not wisdom cry, and understanding lift up her voice." That none may escape her "she standeth by the way in the places of the paths," and "crieth at the gates at the entry of the city, and at the coming in at the doors." Every scientific treatise that is well written, is only a compilation from the works of the great Author of nature, whose instruction it is the business of the skillful to apply and enforce. His office as the priest of nature, is to interpret, to illustrate, to expound, and thus aid those of less capacity in their investigations. But he can establish no new law nor introduce any new principle: for "there is nothing new under the sun."

JOHN M. HAWES, Dep. Supt. Com. Schools.

S. S. RANDALL, Esq.

PLANS OF SCHOOL HOUSES.

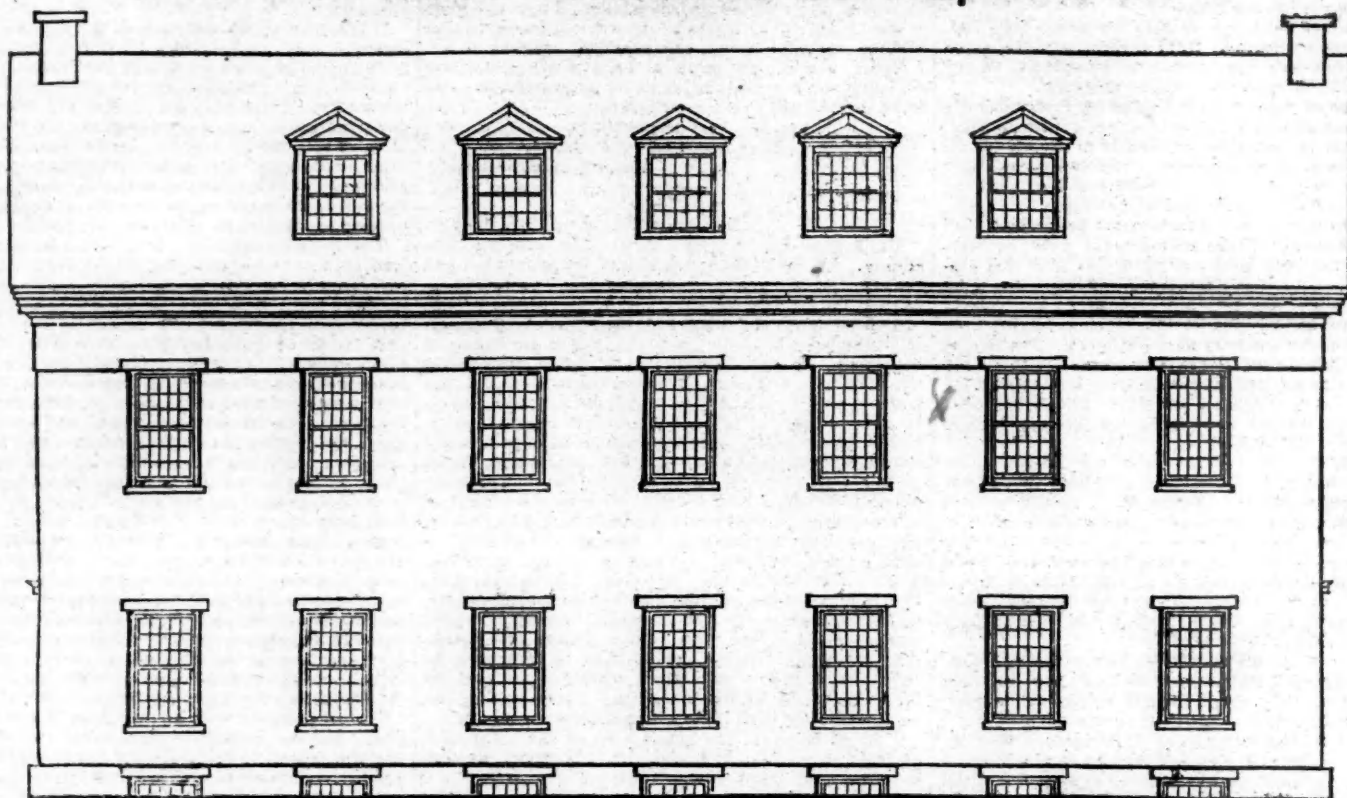


Fig. 1—LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL HOUSE, SIDE ELEVATION.—Scale, 1-12th inch to a foot.

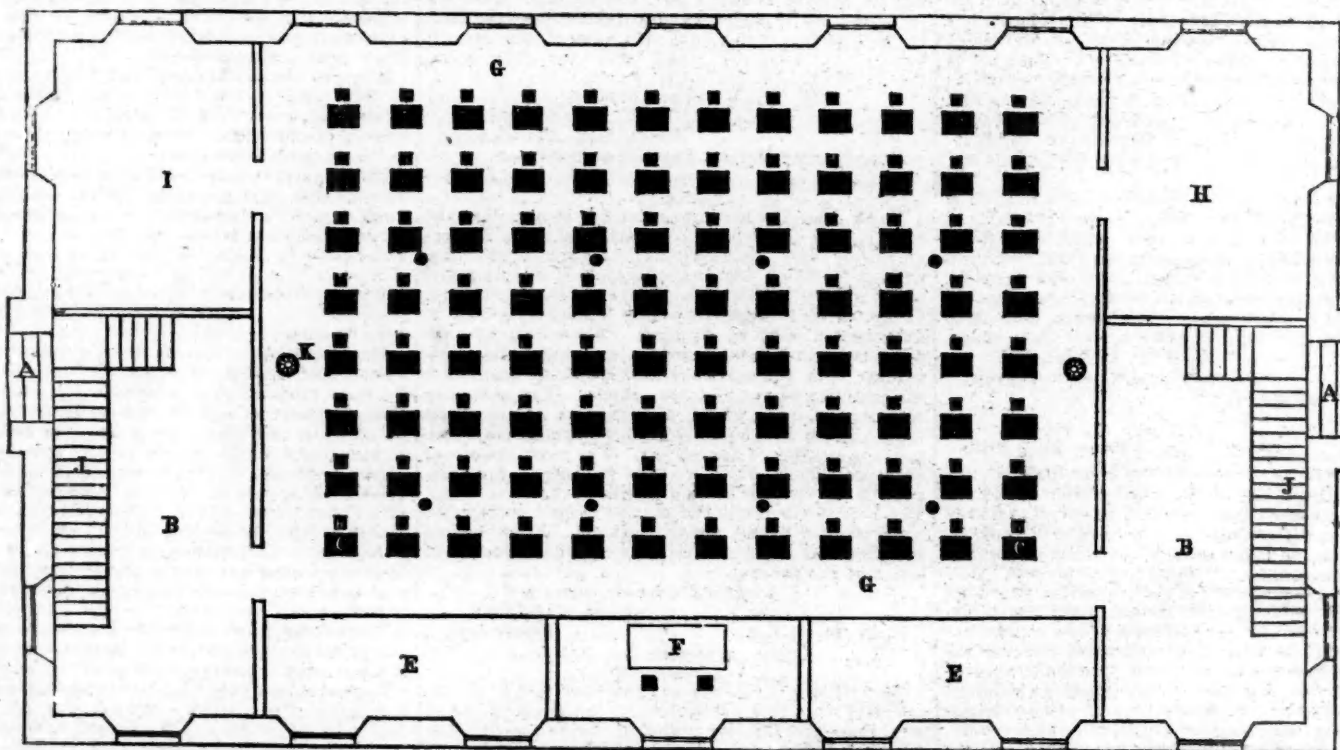


Fig. 2—LOWER SCHOOL ROOM.—Scale, 1-12th inch to a foot.

DESCRIPTION OF LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL HOUSE.

A, A—Entrances at the ends.
 B, B—Entries, provided with hooks, &c. for hats, bonnets, and outer garments.
 Cb, Cb—Single desks and seats.
 E, E—Teacher's platform, 6½ feet wide, raised 6 inches above the floor.
 F—Teacher's desk.
 G, G—Aisle, nearly four feet in width, all around the school room.
 H—Room for library, apparatus, &c.
 I—Recitation room.
 J, J—Stairways to second story.
 K—Hot air-pipe from furnace.
 The house is of brick, 84 feet by 48.
 Each pupil has an area on the floor, for desk and seat, of more than 16 square feet.
 Height of rooms, 14½ feet, in the clear.
 The second floor is very similar to the first.
 The attic is excellently fitted up for a writing department, the seats and desks being placed longitudinally,

and opposite to them a black-board, extending nearly the whole length of the room.

The lot, on which the school house stands contains between ½ and ¾ an acre. It is divided into two parts, furnishing yard and play-ground for the sexes respectively. The boys enter at one end, and the girls at the other. The house has two fronts, each facing a broad street, so that the males and females approach and leave the school by different streets.

Cost, \$18,523.84.—*Mass. Com. School Journal*.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The interesting account of the Teacher's Convention in Orleans County, and of the Common School celebration at Shelby, are in type, and will appear in the next number. Other valuable articles reached us too late for publication.—*Ed.*

NOTICE.

We shall simultaneously with our next number, publish a supplement of double size of the Journal,

which we are enabled, by the liberality of a distinguished friend of education, to supply gratuitously to our readers.

We have many extra copies of the current volume on hand which we will furnish at the rate of 25 cents a year, where 12 copies are taken. And we hope that this low rate will induce the friends of the cause to extend its circulation, if they deem it worthy of support.

Those who are indebted for subscriptions are requested to forward the amount due.—[*Ed.*]

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